

98

Becky Long, Box 1088, Talkeetna AK 99676
Issues320@hotmail.com

12/20/05

Statewide Planning Office-Division of Program Development
3132 Channel Dr., Suite 200
Juneau, Ak 99676

COMMENTS ON STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Critics of the Knik Arm Bridge in the Northern Susitna Valley have all along stated that this will be built at the expense of other more necessary roads and transportation projects. The DOT's Draft FY 06-08 proves this.

Big controversial pork projects such as the Knik Arm Bridge, Gravina Bridge, and the Juneau Road are to be funded instead of need improvements to major roads such Old Seward Highway reconstruction which is cancelled and Community Transportation projects that cover sanitation and evacuation roads in the rural and bush areas.

IN JANUARY 05 DOT'S STIP PROPOSAL WAS TO FUND 385 TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS AT \$4.5 BILLION, BUT THIS LATEST DRAFT STIP HAS ELIMINATED TWO THIRDS OF THESE.
259 projects at \$2billion were cut; and 70 projects worth \$800 million were delayed at least for 4 years.
I AM OPPOSED TO THESE CUTS.

These are major reconstruction, repaving, realignment, and upgrade projects of transportation routes.

Under this DOT proposal over half of the state's transportation funding for the next 3 years would be for the Knik Arm Bridge, Gravina Bridge and the Juneau Road. This is unacceptable. These are pork barrel projects created for economic speculation. The negative socio-economic-environmental negative impacts far outweigh the benefits for the Knik Arm Bridge.

WE MUST MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE OUR CURRENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT STATING THAT THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY TRUST FUND WILL RUN OUT OF MONEY BY 2008.

Through 2015 the government revenue for maintenance will be short \$500 billion and \$1.1 trillion short of what is needed to improve the country's infrastructure. This is speaking of the whole country. That will guarantee some future spirited haggling over federal funds in Congress.

Now is not the time to build new expensive projects in Alaska. The state DOT must prepare for this shortfall. Needed monies for current roads are the priority not pork barrel projects.

KABATA plans to ask the legislature for \$180-200 million for Knik Bridge. KABATA has had recent press with their statement that a Preliminary Traffic and Toll Revenue Study shows this is a self-sustaining and profitable project. This rosy picture needs to be examined closely to see if the state growth projections used are realistic. These statistics assume a high growth curve that seldom matches reality. The Mat Su Borough seems to be a booming economy but how much of that is based on state and federal subsidies. If those subsidies collapse....

If the Knik Bridge really is a worthwhile project, it can always be built later.

